



Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria

Hearing Date: 17 April 2024

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Tomorrow Today

Received Date: 16 & 21 May 2024

1. **Renee HEATH, page 59**

Question Asked to Louise Pearce:

I think what you are doing is absolutely outstanding, and I guess these questions also might be on notice if that is what we are doing. I would love to know more about the strategies you are using to raise the standard of literacy and numeracy, because obviously we know that education is your ticket to choice and that circuit breaker, and if there are any of those strategies that could potentially be used somewhere else. And then I guess just a comment, really – it is so good that kids are getting their love of reading from a young age. I just would love to know about what the training is for those volunteers. And I think this may have actually been in your submission, but I cannot remember: have we seen a change in the outcomes in local schools as a result? But I think I will pass on to my colleagues.

Louise PEARCE: We have recently had a formal evaluation done, so we can pass on all that information.

Renee HEATH: Yes, I saw that.

Louise PEARCE: And we have also got this book here. We could leave you with some things with a bit of background for you.

Renee HEATH: Amazing. Fantastic, thank you.

Response:

Strategies used to raise the standard of literacy and numeracy

We are about to launch the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for all children residing in Benalla Rural City Council with a child aged 0-2 years, 11 months. Preschool aged children are enrolled in this program utilising School Readiness Funding.

Parents' Early Education Partnership (PEEP) – each session commences with parents and their preschool aged child/children sharing a book together. Staff draw parents' attention to ways to talk about books – pointing out the front cover, showing the difference between words and pictures. Children are sensitised to rhyming and alliteration through songs

and stories. Parents are engaged in talk time topics that demonstrate ways they can incidentally involve their children in phonological awareness activities. Each PEEP group session is run at the Benalla Library at least twice annually. PEEP Reading Bears encourage families to read at home. Each bear comes with a book and question kit. Families read the books together at home and then engage children in questioning to expand oral language skills.

Kinder Pals

Kinder Pal volunteers read with children in all Benalla preschools. They draw children's attention to Concepts About Print, letters, punctuation, and phonological awareness skills.

Preschool screening

We screen the preliteracy, prenumeracy and oral language skills of all 4-year old preschool children. Results are shared with preschool teachers and families. Families are provided with tips to enhance development and preschool teachers are provided with resources to use in small and large groups. In Term 3, we work with preschools to identify children who will be commencing school the following year but are not 'switched on' for learning. These children work with our staff in a small, intensive group intervention (3 times a week for 6 weeks). At the end of the preschool year, all children are rescreened and results are shared with their parents and their primary school.

Great Start to School

Parents with a child starting school the following year are encouraged to attend this 4 hour program. The two x 2 hour sessions provide parents with practical strategies for supporting literacy and numeracy development.

Prep Immersion

We partner with Benalla P-12 College to deliver the Prep Immersion program. This program works with up to 20 students, in small groups 4 times a week for 8 weeks. Children are engaged in activities based on the Science of Reading.

Reading Buddies

Trained volunteers work with students in Years 1 and 2 who are falling just below the expected year level benchmark for reading.

Volunteers

We provide three opportunities for people to volunteer in our Early Years programs. Volunteers can assist in our Parents' Early Education Partnership (PEEP), Kinder Pal and Reading Buddy programs. All volunteers engage in a

two hour training session conducted by a primary school teacher and speech pathologist. The training session covers:

- Tomorrow Today's Child Safety policies and procedures
- What a typical PEEP session looks like
- What a typical literacy learning block in a classroom looks like
- Types of questions to ask to expand language growth
- Ways to aid children's development of phonological awareness skills
- How to assist a child with reading
- Trouble shooting issues

PEEP volunteers receive regular guidance and supervision from program staff. Kinder Pals and Reading Buddies are contacted at least once each school term to touch base on progress and to answer any queries.

Our newest program, ConnectParent, is about to launch. This program matches trained and supervised community volunteers (Communiyt Connectors) to support families during the first 1,000 days of their child's life. All volunteers will receive 14 hours of training in the following topics:

- Responsibilities of a being a volunteer Community Connector
- Services to support families in Benalla
- Preparing for Baby
- Active Listening
- The Accidental Counsellor, delivered by the Anxiety Resource Centre
- Identifying and responding to disclosures of family violence, delivered by the Centre Against Violence

The Connectors receive fortnightly supervision sessions to enable them to debrief and trouble shoot any concerns. We aim for the contacts to commence in June 2024.

Regarding impacts on 2023 NAPLAN:

Whilst it is affirming to see that Benalla students are not below average or well below average when compared to students with a similar background (like schools), it is not possible to draw a conclusion regarding improvement; as the Victorian AIM tests are not comparable to the NAPLAN tests. We need to see the next few years of NAPLAN results to know whether this result is confirmation of a positive trend.

Note that most other schools in persistently disadvantaged communities also achieved average results for like schools.

Benalla P-12 College Year 3 students are below the average when compared to all Australian Year 3 students; but not well below

2. **The CHAIR, page 63**

Question Asked to Louise Pearce:

That is fantastic – to actually have solutions and programs that work, which provide evidence for us to put recommendations forward. Again, thank you on behalf of the committee. Thank you so much for coming in here and giving your time, your insight, your experience and the results, and I look forward to getting those from you as well.

Louise PEARCE: We have got our 10-year program and our annual report and some light reading for you.

Melina BATH: If there is anything else that you want to add to us, then feel free to provide it.

Response:

EBP underwent a major two year evaluation in 2022-23. Copy of the evaluation summary report attached. The full evaluation report is available on request.

3. **Melina BATH, page 62**

Question Asked to Sally Matheson:

Chair, could I just interrupt. You have provided the submission. Could you provide any documentation that, say, you gave to Latrobe Valley. I know the group down there. Your kit, that would be.

Sally MATHESON: Yes, we have got some.

Melina BATH: Yes. It could be used to roll out in other locations. That would be really helpful.

Sally MATHESON: Sure.

Response: We provided the group with a copy of our governance structure, our Annual Report and 10 year anniversary booklet. 2023 Annual Report and 10 year anniversary booklet provided at the Enquiry. Governance structure attached.